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TO: Examiner Carlos Lugo

FAX NO.: 571-272-7049

AU 3676

273-8300

FROM: Kyle Rost

NO. OF PAGES: 6

RE: S.N. 10/708,456

DATE: November 17, 2005

MESSAGE:

This is a Discussion Draft for Examiner Lugo in AU 3676. Please deliver promptly. Thank you.

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re patent application

Serial No.: 10/708,456)

Applicant: Michael B. RADEL)

Filed: 03/04/2004)

TC/AU 3676)

Examiner: Carlos LUGO)

Confirmation No. 2455

Attorney Docket No. R 0301)

Customer No. 26092)

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

Examiner Lugo:

The following amended claim 1 is proposed for discussion purposes. The remaining issue in the case is narrow. I believe we can resolve it by telephone. The two-month date from final office action is Nov. 28. I hope to be able to file the official response before then. I will try to reach you by telephone, or if you have a chance to consider this before I call, you can reach me at 720-528-8863 (Denver – mountain time zone).

Status summary: Claim 1 presently is rejected as lacking novelty over Wilcox. In applicant's amendment dated 7/20/2005 to the first Office Action, claim 1 was amended to distinguish from Wilcox. The amendment added the new and distinguishing feature of a keeper end stop (28 in fig. 2) that limits entry of the latch bar (10) into the keeper (14). In the preferred embodiment described in the specification, the keeper end stop (14) and a transverse plunger head (52) carried in the keeper are mutually positioned to strike one another when a transverse lock cavity (26) in the latch bar (10) is aligned with the plunger head (52).

Thus, the new feature is the striking between an element of the keeper (14) and an element of the latch bar (10) when the keeper and latch bar are mutually positioned for plunger (52) to enter cavity (26). This new feature produces improved reliability in the engagement between the cross-latch with the latch bar (10). Wilcox teaches no structure in the keeper capable of producing similar interaction between a latch bar and a keeper.

In the most recent Office Action dated 9/28/2005, the examiner notes that the applicant should clearly establish in the claim that the stop interacts with a keeper element. This discussion draft is directed to a proposed claim to clearly establish this relationship.

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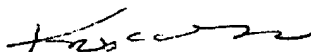
Discussion of proposed amendment: The proposed amendments to claim 1 first provide, at line 12, that the keeper "comprises" a cross-latch. This change makes clear that the cross-latch is a component of the keeper, rather than merely being "carried" by the keeper.

Next, at line 20 the latch bar is identified as comprising a keeper end stop, establishing that one part of the interacting stop structures is a part of the latch bar. Further, the keeper is identified as including "a means engageable with said keeper end stop for stopping entry of said latch bar within the reception passage at a position where the cavity is positioned to receive the cross-latch. . . ." This establishes a complimentary element in the keeper for interacting with the keeper end stop of the latch bar. The specification supports this means-plus-function language at the last two lines of paragraph [0038]. These portions of the amendment directly address the examiner's requirement that the claim should clearly establish that the stop interacts with a keeper element.

Further amendments to lines 31-32 better conform the remainder of the claim to the changes just discussed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



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Draft Listing of Claims:

[c1]

1. (currently amended) In a latch assembly formed of a bolt housing, a longitudinally elongated latch bar partially retained within a passageway of the bolt housing and longitudinally extendable therefrom, and a keeper having a reception passage for receiving an extending free end of the latch bar; wherein the free end of the latch bar is extendable from the bolt housing into the keeper, thereby establishing a latching relationship with the keeper, the improvement comprising:

the free end of said latch bar is configured with a cavity on a lateral face thereof, and the latch bar is forked from the free end of the latch bar to a junction with said cavity, thereby defining a longitudinal slot extending from the free end of the latch bar and leading into the bolt cavity;

the cavity is of a dimension wider than the width of said slot at its junction with the cavity;

said keeper ~~carries~~ comprises a cross-latch in a transversely moveable relationship with respect to said reception passage, between positions of greater and lesser intersection with the reception passage;

resilient means biases movement of said cross-latch toward a position of greater intersection with the reception passage;

an operator is connected to the cross-latch for selectively retracting the cross-latch against the force of said resilient means to a position of lesser intersection with the reception passage;

the latch bar comprises a keeper end stop, and the keeper includes a means engageable with said keeper end stop for stopping entry of said latch bar within the reception passage at a position where the cavity is positioned to receive the cross-latch ~~a keeper end stop, operating between the keeper and the latch bar, is suitably positioned to limit entry of the latch bar into the reception passage to a position where said cavity is aligned to receive said cross latch, when the cross-latch is in said position of lesser intersection with the reception passage, whereby, when the cross latch is in said position of lesser intersection with the reception passage, the latch bar is able to enter the reception passage to a suitable position to receive the operator into the cavity;~~

wherein said cavity and cross-latch are suitably arranged such that the cross-latch and cavity are mutually engaged when the cross-latch is in said position of greater intersection with the reception passage and ~~the free end of the latch bar has been~~ is sufficiently inserted into

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positioned in the reception passage to receive the cross-latch, thereby locking the latch bar to the keeper; and

the cross-latch and cavity are mutually disengaged when the cross-latch is in said position of lesser intersection with the reception passage, allowing the latch bar to be inserted into or removed from the reception passage.

[c2]

2. (canceled)

[c3]

3. (canceled)

[c4]

4. (previously presented) In the latch assembly of claim 3, the further improvement comprising:

said latch bar is configured as a plate of rectangular transverse profile; and

said reception passage is configured with a matching rectangular profile for receiving the latch bar, such that the latch bar is substantially non-rotatable with respect to the reception passage and relative movement between the latch bar and the reception passage is substantially along a single longitudinal axis;

whereby, moving the latch bar along a single longitudinal axis establishes alignment between the cavity with the cross-latch.

[c5]

5. (previously presented) In the latch assembly of claim 4, the further improvement comprising:

said latch bar carries a longitudinal rib of predetermined height on a major face thereof;

a matching channel in said keeper extends parallel to said reception passage and receives said rib;

said keeper end stop further comprises a keeper end of the rib that terminates at an edge of said cavity, longitudinally opposite from said slot; and

in said position of lesser intersection with the reception passage, said cross-latch is interposed in said keeper channel such that said keeper end of the rib strikes a side of the

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cross-latch longitudinally opposite from said slot when the cross-latch and cavity are aligned for the cross-latch to enter the cavity.

[c6]

6. (original) In the latch assembly of claim 4, the further improvement comprising:

said bolt housing passageway is configured with a rectangular profile suitable to carry said latch bar in slidable relationship;

the latch bar carries a longitudinal rib of predetermined height on a major face thereof;

a matching channel in said bolt housing extends parallel to the bolt housing passageway and receives said rib;

said bolt housing channel includes a bolt housing channel base wall facing the rib and spaced from the bolt housing passageway by a greater dimension than said predetermined height of the rib;

whereby the latch bar is guided in said bolt housing on a major face in contact with the bolt housing passageway, suspending the rib at a gap from said bolt housing channel base.

[c7]

7. (original) In the latch assembly of claim 6, the further improvement comprising:

said rib carries a first stop extending from the rib toward said bolt housing channel base; and

said bolt housing channel carries a second stop in an interfering position with respect to said first stop;

whereby the first and second stops prevent said latch bar from exiting said bolt housing in at least a first longitudinal direction of movement.

[c8]

8. (canceled)

[c9]

9. (canceled)

[c10]

10. (canceled)